

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

The specification as amended below with replacement paragraphs shows added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~strikethrough~~.

Please REPLACE the paragraph beginning at page 1, line 15, with the following paragraph:

[0003] The conveyor system disclosed in this is shown in FIGS. 9A and 9B. The conveyor system is a conveyor system for conveying a wafer or other workpiece 100 provided with a plate-shaped member 102 at the center of one surface 102a where a Bernoulli ~~Verneuil~~ nozzle 104 is formed. This Bernoulli ~~Verneuil~~ nozzle 104 has a baffle plate 104a at its nozzle part and a pressurized air blowing port 104b formed in a crescent shape. Therefore, the pressurized air from the Bernoulli ~~Verneuil~~ nozzle 104 is strongly blown out in the direction of a stopper 106 provided at the outer periphery of the plate-shaped member 102 as shown in FIG. 9B. According to this Bernoulli ~~Verneuil~~ nozzle 104, the suction force based on the Bernoulli ~~Verneuil~~ principle, that is, the lift, acts on the workpiece 100 and the workpiece 100 is lifted without abutting against the surface 102a of the plate-shaped member 102. However, the Bernoulli ~~Verneuil~~ nozzle 104 blows the air out strongly in the direction of the stopper 106, so the workpiece 100 lifted by suction by the Bernoulli ~~Verneuil~~ nozzle 104 moves in the direction of the stopper 106 and the side surface of the workpiece 100 contacts the stopper 106.

Please REPLACE the paragraph beginning at page 2, line 1, with the following paragraph:

[0004] The surface 102a of the plate-shaped member 102 is provided with three vacuum chucking nozzles 108, 108, and 108 near the outer periphery of the plate-shaped member 102 along the outer periphery. These vacuum chucking nozzles 108, 108, and 108, as shown in FIG. 9A, are connected with a vacuum pump or other vacuum generator (not shown) through a tube 112 and conduit 110 formed in the plate-shaped member 102. The front ends of the vacuum chucking nozzles 108, 108, and 108, as shown in FIG. 9A, are provided projecting out from the surface 102a of the plate-shaped member 102. Therefore, the workpiece 100 lifted by the Bernoulli ~~Verneuil~~ nozzle 104 and abutting against the stopper 106 is chucked to the front ends of the vacuum chucking nozzles 108, 108, and 108 without abutting against the surface 102a of the plate-shaped member 102.

Please REPLACE the paragraph beginning at page 2, line paragraph 17, with the following paragraph:

[0005] According to the conveyor system shown in FIGS. 9A and 9B, the workpiece 100 lifted

in a noncontact state with the surface 102a of the plate-shaped member 102 by the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzle 104 is chucked near the periphery to the front ends of the vacuum chucking nozzles 108, 108, and 108, so it is possible to convey the workpiece 100 in a substantially noncontact state with the plate-shaped member 102. Further, the workpiece 100 chucked to the front ends of the vacuum chucking nozzles 108, 108, and 108 are in a fixed state with the plate-shaped member 102, so by swiveling the plate-shaped member 102, it is possible to easily position the work 100. In recent years, however, the wafers used for semiconductor chips have been made thinner. Wafers of thicknesses of less than 100 μm are being provided to the market. If conveying such thin wafers using the conveyor system shown in FIGS. 9A and 9B, it is learned that the wafers will easily fracture or other problems will occur during conveyance.

Please REPLACE the paragraph beginning at page 3, line 4, with the following paragraph:

[0007] The inventors studied how to achieve this object and as a result discovered that by using a movable plate-shaped member formed with a plurality of Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles and a plurality of vacuum chucking nozzles alternately at the workpiece chucking surface near the outer periphery of the plate-shaped member along the outer periphery, it is possible to safely convey a thin workpiece having a thickness of less than 100 μm and easily position the workpiece without damaging it and thereby perfected the present invention.

Please REPLACE the paragraph beginning at page 3, line 14, with the following paragraph:

[0008] According to a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a conveyor system for conveying a wafer or other thin workpiece having a thickness of not more than 100 μm from a carrying location to another location, wherein the conveyor system is provided with a plate-shaped member provided movably and swivelably and a moving and swiveling means moving and swiveling the plate-shaped member, the plate-shaped member is provided together with a lifting means for uniformly lifting in its entirety a workpiece carried at the carrying location and a holding means for holding a workpiece lifted by the lifting means by uniformly chucking its entirety on a workpiece chucking surface of the plate-shaped member, and a plurality of Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles serving as the lifting means are formed in the workpiece chucking surface near an outer periphery of the plate-shaped member along the outer periphery.

Please REPLACE the paragraph beginning at page 3, line 31, with the following paragraph:

[0009] By comprising the holding means by a plurality of vacuum chucking nozzles and by

alternately forming the plurality of Bernoulli ~~Verneuil~~ nozzles forming the lifting means and the plurality of vacuum chucking nozzles on the workpiece chucking surface near the outer periphery of the plate-shaped member along the outer periphery, it is possible to simplify the structure of the plate-shaped member. By using a porous member for a chucking pad of a vacuum chucking nozzle, it is possible to eliminate the danger of making chucking marks on the workpiece. Further, by comprising the holding means by at least one electrostatic chucking plate and providing the electrostatic chucking plate at the workpiece chucking surface of the plate-shaped member, it is possible to further simplify the structure of the plate-shaped member for an electrostatically chuckable workpiece. In the present invention, since a lifting means and a holding means are both used, by providing a controller for controlling a drive timing of the two, it is possible to accurately drive and stop the two means at predetermined timings and possible to reliably convey the workpieces. Further, by providing a detachment prevention member for preventing part of the workpiece lifted by the plurality of Bernoulli ~~Verneuil~~ nozzles from being detached from the plate-shaped member at the outer periphery of the plate-shaped member, it is possible to reliably position the workpiece at one surface of the plate-shaped member. By biasing the detachment prevention member by an elastic member in a direction where its front end projects out from the workpiece chucking surface of the plate-shaped member, it is possible to easily change the length of the detachment prevention member projecting out from the workpiece chucking surface of the plate-shaped member by adjusting the biasing force of the elastic member etc. Further, by providing a switching station provided with a plurality of pressurized air blowing nozzles blowing pressurized air from below the workpiece so as to prevent the workpiece from dropping off when switching a workpiece lifted by the lifting means comprised of a plurality of Bernoulli ~~Verneuil~~ nozzles to holding by the holding means, it is possible to reliably prevent a situation where the workpiece drops off and is damaged when switching from the lifting means to the holding means.

Please REPLACE the paragraph beginning at page 5, line 1, with the following paragraph:

[0010] According to the present invention, it is possible to equally lift a workpiece having a thickness of less than 100 μm carried at the carrying location without the workpiece as a whole abutting against the workpiece chucking surface of the plate-shaped member by a plurality of Bernoulli ~~Verneuil~~ nozzles formed in the workpiece chucking surface near the outer periphery of the plate-shaped member along the outer periphery. Further, the lifted workpiece is held by chucking to the workpiece chucking surface of the plate-shaped member equally as a whole by a holding means provided at the plate-shaped member. In this way, it is possible to easily

recognize the position of a workpiece chucked to the workpiece chucking surface of the plate-shaped member and possible to position the workpiece by moving and/or swiveling the plate-shaped member by a moving and swiveling means based on this recognition.

Please REPLACE the paragraph beginning at page 5, line 18, with the following paragraph:

[0011] According to a second aspect of the present invention, there is provided a conveyance method using any of the above conveyor systems including the steps of moving the plate-shaped member to a first position on which a workpiece is placed, lowering the plate-shaped member down to the workpiece, starting the blowing of air from the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles, chucking the workpiece by the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles, lifting up the plate-shaped member, starting suction by vacuum chucking nozzles to chuck the workpiece by both of the vacuum chucking nozzles and Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles, stopping the blowing of air from the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles and chucking the workpiece by only the vacuum chucking nozzles, and moving the plate-shaped member to a second position for processing of the next workpiece.

Please REPLACE the paragraph beginning at page 6, line 5, with the following paragraph:

FIG. 3 is a partial sectional view for explaining a Bernoulli Verneuil nozzle provided at the plate-shaped member of FIGS. 2A and 2B;

Please REPLACE the paragraph beginning at page 7, line 27, with the following paragraph:

[0016] The plate-shaped member 20 mounted to a shaft 19 at the front end of the multiarticulated robot 18 and taking out and conveying the wafer 14 from the cassette 12 is provided with both a lifting means for lifting a wafer stacked in the cassette 12 and a holding means for chucking and holding the wafer 14 lifted by the lifting means at the workpiece chucking surface of the plate-shaped member 20. The plate-shaped member 20 is shown in FIGS. 2A and 2B. This plate-shaped member 20 is formed with openings 30a of the plurality of Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles 30, 30... serving as the lifting means and chucks 32a of the plurality of vacuum chucking nozzles 32, 32... serving as the holding means at the wafer chucking surface 20a near the outer periphery of the plate-shaped member along the outer periphery of the plate-shaped member 20.

Please REPLACE the paragraph beginning at page 8, line 6, with the following paragraph:

[0017] In this way, by forming the openings 30a of the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles 30, 30... at

the wafer chucking surface 20a near the outer periphery of the plate-shaped member 20, it is possible to evenly lift up the entirety of the wafer 14 by the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles 30, 30... Therefore, warping occurring at the wafer 14 lifted can be reduced as much as possible as in the case of lifting the wafer 14 by a Bernoulli Verneuil nozzle 104 with an opening 104b formed at the center of the plate-shaped member 102 shown in FIGS. 9A and 9B. Therefore, when driving the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles 30, 30... to lift a thin wafer of a thickness of less than 100 μm from the cassette 12, it is possible to prevent fracture etc. due to warping of the wafer 14.

Please REPLACE the paragraph beginning at page 8, line 19, with the following paragraph:

[0018] A Bernoulli Verneuil nozzle 30, as shown in FIG. 3, is formed with a tapered opening 30a at the wafer chucking surface 20a of the plate-shaped member 20. A lift based on the so-called "Bernoulli Verneuil principle" acts on the wafer 14. That is, a conical air flow is blown out from the tapered opening 30a shown in FIG. 3. The outer peripheral air flow blown out along the inclined surface of the opening 30a in the conical air flow becomes higher in speed than the internal air flow blown out from the center of the opening 30a. The internal air flow is pulled to the high speed outer peripheral air flow side, so the conical space (part directly before the opening 30a) becomes a negative pressure and the wafer 14 is lifted. On the other hand, if the wafer 14 is lifted up to block the air flow blown out along the inclined surface of the opening 30a, the negative pressure occurring near the center of the conical air flow is eliminated and the lifted up wafer 14 is lowered. However, if the wafer 14 is lowered, the air flow blown out along the inclined surface of the opening 30a is reproduced, negative pressure is reproduced near the center of the conical air flow, and the wafer 14 is lifted up again. These two contradictory actions balance out, whereby the wafer 14 is lifted up to a predetermined height without abutting against the wafer chucking surface 20a of the plate-shaped member. The wafer 14 lifted up by the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles 30, 30... is moved by the air flow along the wafer chucking surface 20a of the plate-shaped member 20 without being affixed to the wafer chucking surface 20a. Therefore, the wafer 14 is kept from detaching from part of the wafer chucking surface 20a of the plate-shaped member 20 by providing plates 34, 34... serving as detachment prevention members at the side wall surfaces of the plate-shaped member 20. Further, according to the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles 30, 30..., it is possible to also lift up the interlayer paper between the wafers 14 stacked in the cassette 12 and possible to convey it from the cassette 12 to the container 28.

Please REPLACE the paragraph beginning at page 9, line 20, with the following paragraph:

[0019] However, with just the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles 30, 30..., the wafer 14 moves without being fixed to the wafer chucking surface 20a of the plate-shaped member 20, so the position of the wafer 14 cannot be recognized at the position measurement area 22 and the wafer 14 cannot be positioned. Therefore, with the plate-shaped member 20 shown in FIGS. 2A and 2B, the chucks 32a of the vacuum chucking nozzles 32, 32... are opened at the wafer chucking surface 20a near the outer periphery of the plate-shaped member 20 along the outer periphery of the plate-shaped member 20. Therefore, a wafer 14 lifted up by the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles 30, 30... can be fixed to the wafer chucking surface 20a of the plate-shaped member 10 by the vacuum chucking nozzles 32, 32..., the plate-shaped member 20 can be swiveled based on the positional data of the wafer 14 recognized by the position measurement area 22, and the wafer 13 can be positioned.

Please REPLACE the paragraph beginning at page 10, line 28, with the following paragraph:

[0021] Further, in the plate-shaped member 20 shown in FIGS. 2A and 2B, the openings 30a of the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles 30, 30... and the chucks 32a of the vacuum chucking nozzles 32, 32... are alternately formed at the wafer chucking surface 20a near the outer periphery of the plate-shaped member 20. Therefore, it is possible to evenly disperse the openings 30a of the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles 30, 30... near the outer periphery of the plate-shaped member 20 and possible to evenly disperse the chucks 32a of the vacuum chucking nozzles 32, 32... As a result, it is possible to more evenly lift the wafer 14 by the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles 30, 30... and chuck the entirety of the wafer 14 to the wafer chucking surface 20a by the vacuum chucking nozzles 32, 32... and possible to further prevent fracture and other damage of the wafer 14.

Please REPLACE the paragraph beginning at page 11, line 6, with the following paragraph:

[0022] Next, an operational process for moving the wafer 14 by a plate-shaped member 20 attached to a front head of the robot 18 will be explained. As an example, FIG. 8 shows an operational flow chart of the case of moving a wafer 14 from the cassette 12 to the position measurement area 22. At step 1, first the head to which the plate-shaped member 20 is attached is moved to the cassette 12 (FIG. 1). At step 2, next, the head is lowered to the wafer 14 in the cassette 12. At step 3, air starts to be blown out from the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles 30. At step 4, the wafer is chucked and the detection sensor is turned on. At step 5, the head is raised. At step 6, the suction by the vacuum chucking nozzles 32 is started. At step 7, air stops being blown from the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles 30. At step 8, the vacuum pressure is confirmed. (If vacuum pressure is abnormal, an alarm is turned on.) At step 9, the head is moved to the position

measurement area 22. At step 10, the wafer position is measured.

Please REPLACE the paragraph beginning at page 11, line 24, with the following paragraph:

[0023] The drive timings of the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles 30, 30... and vacuum chucking nozzles 32, 32... provided at the plate-shaped member 20 shown in FIG. 2A are controlled by the controller 36. That is, when lifting the wafer 14 from the cassette 12, the controller 36 emits signals for driving the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles 30, 30... and emits signals for stopping the driving of the vacuum chucking nozzles 32, 32... Next, when chucking the wafer 14 lifted by the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles 30, 30... by the vacuum chucking nozzles 32, 32... on the wafer chucking surface 20a of the plate-shaped member 20, it emits signals for driving the vacuum chucking nozzles 32, 32... and emits signals for stopping the drive of the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles 30, 30... Regarding the timing for switching the operation of the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles 30, 30... and vacuum chucking nozzles 32, 32..., if the wafer 14 lifted by the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles 30, 30... will not drop, it is possible to stop the operation of the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles 30, 30... at the same time as operating the vacuum chucking nozzles 32, 32..., but it is safer to provide a time for operation where the two overlap, then stop the operation of the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles 30, 30...

Please REPLACE the paragraph beginning at page 12, line 9, with the following paragraph:

[0024] When switching the operation of the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles 30, 30... and the vacuum chucking nozzles 32, 32..., to reliably prevent dropping of the lifted wafer 14, it is preferable to provide a switching station 38 between the cassette 12 shown in FIG. 1 and the position measurement area 22. This switching station 38 is provided with a plate-shaped station part 40 provided with a plurality of pressurized air blowing nozzles for blowing out pressurized air from below the wafer 14 lifted by the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles 30, 30... of the plate-shaped member 20 as shown in FIG. 5. This station part 40 is connected with a feed pipe 42 for supplying pressurized air to the plurality of pressurized air blowing nozzles. By switching the operation between the Bernoulli Verneuil nozzles 30, 30... and the vacuum chucking nozzles 32, 32... on the switching station 38, it is possible to reliably prevent dropping of the wafer 14 even with deviation in the timing of switching of operation between the two.

Please REPLACE the paragraph beginning at page 12, line, 28, with the following paragraph:

[0025] The plates 34, 34... serving as the detachment prevention member provided at the

plate-shaped member 20 shown in FIG. 1 to FIG. 5 are affixed to the side wall surfaces of the plate-shaped member 20. Therefore, when stopping the operation of the vacuum chucking nozzles 32, 32... at the adhesion area 24 shown in FIG. 1 and taking out the wafer 14 chucked to the wafer chucking surface 20a by the vacuum chucking nozzles 32, 32... of the plate-shaped member 20d and placing it on the carrying surface, the front ends of the plates 34, 34... abut against the carrying surface of the adhesion area 24 and a predetermined gap is formed between the wafer chucking surface 20a of the plate-shaped member 20 and the carrying surface. Therefore, if stopping the operation of the vacuum chucking nozzles 32, 32..., the wafer 14 descends by a predetermined distance and abuts against the carrying surface. To reduce as much as possible the gap between the wafer chucking surface 20a and ~~carrying surface~~ of the plate-shaped member 20 and the carrying surface of the adhesion area 24, as shown in FIG. 6, it is preferable to use a detachment prevention member biasing the plate 34 by a spring 44 serving as an elastic member in a direction where the front end projects from the wafer chucking surface 20a of the plate-shaped member 20. According to the detachment prevention member shown in FIG. 6, when the front end of the plate 34 abuts against the carrying surface of the adhesion area 24, it is possible to bring the plate-shaped member 20 into proximity with the carrying surface against the biasing force of the spring 44 and possible to reduce as much as possible the gap between the wafer chucking surface 20a and the carrying surface of the adhesion area 24. If it were possible to reduce as much as possible the gap between the wafer chucking surface 20a and the carrying surface of the adhesion area 24, it would be possible to shorten the dropping distance of the wafer 14 and reduce the impact when the wafer 14 strikes the carrying surface of the adhesion area 24.

Please REPLACE the paragraph beginning at page 13, line 28, with the following paragraph:

[0026] Further, the plate-shaped member 20 shown in FIG. 1 to FIG. 5 uses the vacuum chucking nozzles 32, 32... as the holding means, but when there is no problem with using electrostatic force for the wafer 14, as shown in FIG. 7, it is possible to arrange an electrostatic chucking plate 46 as the holding means at the wafer chucking surface 20a. The electrostatic chucking plate 46 has to evenly chuck the entirety of the wafer 14, so, as shown in FIG. 7, it is also possible to arrange a single electrostatic chucking plate 46 so as to cover the part including the center of the plate-shaped member 20. Instead of the plurality of chucks 32a, 32a... shown in FIG. 2B, it is also possible to arrange a plurality of electrostatic chucking plates. In this case as well, the openings 30a of the plurality of ~~Bernoulli Venturi~~ nozzles 30, 30... and the plurality of electrostatic chucking plates are alternately provided at the wafer chucking surface 20a near the

outer periphery of the plate-shaped member 20 along the outer periphery. In this way, by using the electrostatic chucking plate 46, in the same way as the case of using the vacuum chucking nozzles 32, 32..., it is possible to eliminate the vacuum pump etc. and possible to simplify the conveyor system. According to the present invention, it is possible to safely convey a thin wafer of a thickness of less than 100 μm without damage and possible to easily position the workpiece. Therefore, it is possible to deal with the increasing thinness of workpieces.